

Pre-workshop comment

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Wording memory for nationalitarian purposes: A contribution of political science to LCS applied to memory-related written artefacts

To a large extent, memory should be considered to result from a recording process that requires three main intellectual operations: the partial collecting of data (selection of information items), the sense-making treatment of the collected data (interpretation), the connection of the treated data with data previously treated and arranged into a more or less self-consistent structural matrix of verbal and non-verbal behaviours, which is called either personal identity or collective ideology according to the number of people and the kind of method involved in the very process. Each operation occurs, unbeknownst to the operators or at their behest, as the making of and the dealing with accounts which are the work of both historicity and fictionality.

Memory would be wholly indiscernible, though, and hence nothing short of a deceptive concept, were it not for the material and immaterial evidence thereof. Such evidence can be found in text-based documents and in verbal utterances. Some text-based documents are published or expected to be so, while some others remain unpublished or expected to remain so. The published documents range from books and periodicals (edited material) to paper-like and any other written artefacts (printed material) or text-forming display of objects. Unpublished documents consist of ego-documents (eg diaries, written impressions) and subject-related documents (reports, minutes and the like) to which access has been or happens to be restricted. To classify verbal utterances, one must take into account their level of formality/informality, the variety of stimuli they respond to, the frequency and the variability of their occurrences, the medium used for their possible recording.

My assumption is that the resort to those documents as specific or casual media for expressing memory is part of a conscious or unconscious strategy for supporting a sustainably favourable social configuration, be such a configuration already set (confirmation), no longer effective (restoration) or just aimed at (creation). I have, besides, some grounds to think that, in Western countries at least and in countries under the rule of laws rather than customs, the more explicitly or potentially (meta)political that strategy is, the likelier is the resort to written artefacts and the trend to turn verbal utterances into written artefacts. It therefore behoves not only political or social scientists, but also LCS researchers to find answers to the subsequent questions as to who uses those documents, what documents are used, what use is made of them, what purpose this use serves. When they happen to deal with such issues, political or social scientists tend to focus on political or social gains and losses for actors, whilst LCS researchers might prefer to stick to texts and text-like objects. Joint efforts from academics familiar with different, valid methods of investigation and analysis will certainly prove useful in the endeavour to test the above hypothesis.

Indeed research on memory-related and/or memory-conveying documents amounts, on the one hand, to identifying actors involved in the production process (producers, providers, targets, beneficiaries/victims), items resulting from that process (documents), and the process itself (conditions, context, aim) and, on the other hand, to assessing the efficiency or relevance and actual effects of the choices that have been made. Doing so, researchers will by no means turn into marketing/communication experts or into spin-doctors, but at least they can satisfyingly and legitimately indulge in their intellectual curiosity, in accordance with their professional duty and axiological neutrality, by providing valuable, reliable information not only to fellow researchers from other disciplines or from their own, for the sake of science, but also to different social actors, for

some own purposes, who might need the conclusions of their work or their advice before launching specific projects or policies.

In my presentation, I will aim to briefly sketch a possible research scheme in the very specific field of studies of nationalitarian movements¹. I will approach the production of memory documents as the result of the achieved or expected emancipation of objectively or so-called dominated cultures as well as that of the achieved or expected creation of purposefully or haphazardly dominant cultures (such as national cultures or even the 'European' culture). From the chart² in which the outcomes of my preliminary research will be shown, I will draw a few conclusions about the method LCS could use to tackle such an issue and thereby draw the attention of stake-holders to both the research and its possible benefits.

1 Some political scientists and historians have made a difference between nationalism and nationalitarian movement. Whereas the former is concerned with the congruence between cultural/ethnicity and political unity, the latter strives for the constitution, protection and promotion of a culture deemed as different from dominant ones, whether that effort prompts political claims or not.

2 For each political, administrative, associative, economic category of actors (lines), I will pinpoint the intended/achieved actions, pursued goals, assessed effects, and possible role of LCS researchers (columns).